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GSD 120-72  
29 November 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED] Chief/Advanced  
Projects Staff/OCS

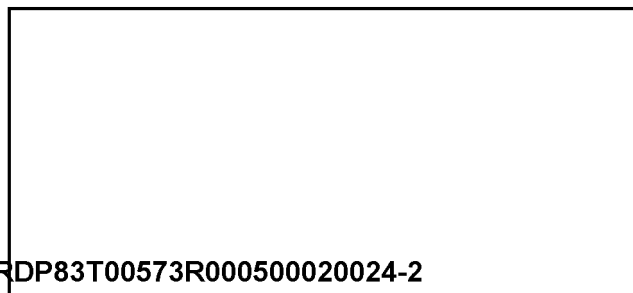
SUBJECT: Comments on "RFP for a Mass Storage System"

1. As requested, I have reviewed the proposed RFP for a Mass Storage System (MSS), and my comments are summarized in this memorandum. It is my understanding that the RFP is intended to select a contractor to provide the MSS, both hardware and software, but that there are wide differences in the probable hardware approaches of the various bidders. For this reason, exact hardware specifications are not defined at this time, but will be made part of the eventual contract, after selection. For evaluation purposes, the RFP states what must be done, rather than attempting to define the hardware and software that might do the job. Evaluation criteria and weighting factors for technical (60%) and business proposals (40%) are clearly stated. Because of the wide diversity of possible solutions, I believe this approach is the only practical one. There are, however, some areas in the RFP that I believe could be strengthened.

2. Several of the key technical specifications should be more quantitatively expressed, where the range of acceptable values is known to OCS. This will avoid responses from contractors whose technical approach does not meet the key specifications, thus preventing needless effort of both contractors and Agency evaluators.

a. Access time to files and time to "backfill" a typical p-space. If these are critical requirements, minimum acceptable values should be specified.

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b. Installation site requirements, especially space and power. The RFP requires the MSS to occupy less space than presently used to store tapes and disk files, but does not explicitly define what is acceptable. A goal and maximum should be specified.

c. Storage media characteristics. Active life, shelf life, and archival storage requirements are known and should be specified as targets or goals, if not as absolute requirements.

3. In Section 6, the Evaluation and Selection Criteria are listed for both technical and business proposals. The technical categories should be grouped in terms of major and minor importance. "Vendor's Understanding the Problem", "Overall Technical Design", and "System Test/Integration Plan" are major evaluation criteria, and should be emphasized as such. The quantitative limits recommended above could be repeated here for clarity, and absolute requirements re-emphasized. Contractors who do not meet the technical requirements or do not adequately indicate competence in the major evaluation areas can then be eliminated during evaluation, regardless of their cost proposals.

4. The proposed method of contracting--fixed price for hardware and CPIF for software--leaves open a potentially large area for future contention. The contractor will be inclined to "fix" problems in hardware performance by making software modifications, probably at great expense to the Agency. Also, the initial hardware specifications must be very detailed and any Agency attempt to influence technical developments after "go-ahead" will result in "scope-change" arguments. Although it is admittedly a minority viewpoint, I believe fixed price contracting should cover only those hardware items that can be "purchased" rather than developed, and that the rest of the program should be funded on a CPIF or CPAF basis.

5. Overall, the program is well conceived and the RFP should achieve its objective. My recommendations are

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aimed at preventing responses from contractors who  
clearly cannot meet your requirements.

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Chairman, Storage Devices Panel  
TCC

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